



FALL/WINTER 2023



# facets



# Home is where the Health is.



University of  
Pittsburgh

Revolutionizing how adults age in place.



# contents

FALL/WINTER 2023

## WELCOME TO FACETS.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) is a leader in the field of health care education, with several of our programs ranked among the best in the country and with alumni representing SHRS around the world. Inside every issue of our alumni magazine, FACETS, you'll discover many sides of the SHRS legacy. You'll hear how our students and faculty continue to step out boldly and confidently in the classroom, in the lab and in the community. You'll learn how our bold moves lead to innovations and collaborations, groundbreaking research and meaningful connections. You'll get a sense of our past. And the vision that drives us to shape the future of health care.

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**Publisher**  
Anthony Delitto

**Executive Editor**  
Natalie Baney

**Editors**  
Caitlin Pugh  
Jill Bodnar

**Writing and Design**  
Red House Communications

**Photography**  
University of Pittsburgh



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Cover: Part of the Healthy Home Lab team including, from left to right: Joey Engelmeier, Jennifer McCartney, Jon Pearlman, Zachary Roy, Yong Choi, Pamela Toto, Dave Brienza, Patricia Karg and Paulina Villacreces. Standing in second row are Everette James, Jemima Ohwobete, Jack Fried and Bill Ammer.

## From the Dean

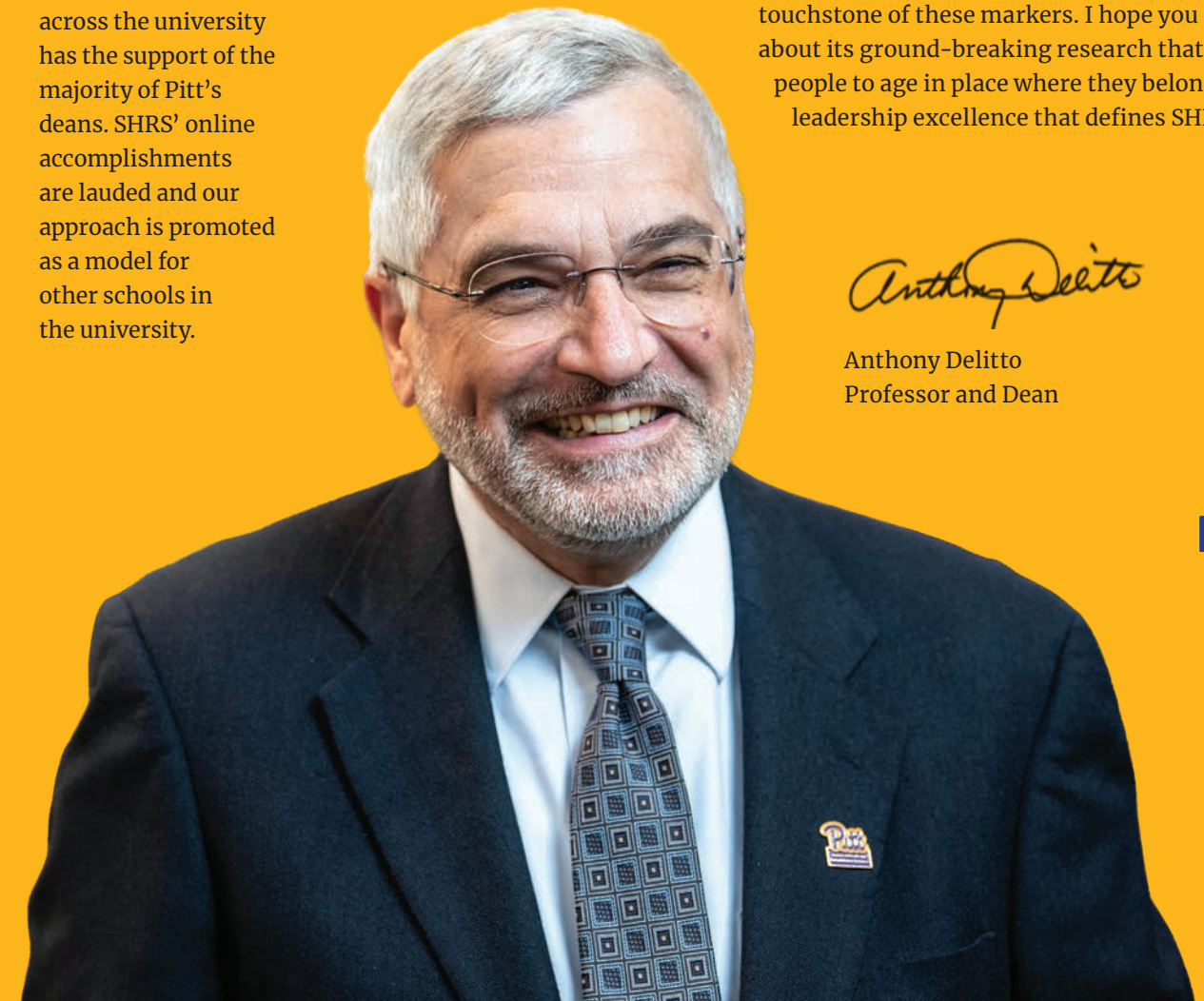
Fall term was full of excitement and energy surrounding a new academic year and new leadership across several fronts. Chancellor Joan T.A. Gabel is now at the helm of the university. She has openly shared that one of her draws to Pitt was the strength of our health sciences programs! Her track record of instilling academic and research excellence in our disciplines means that there has never been a better time to be at SHRS and to promote the health sciences brand. She has already singled out SHRS' programs at the fall Board of Trustees meeting and in public messages around campus. As the new chancellor, Joan takes great pride in sharing among leadership that four of SHRS' flagship rehabilitation programs are ranked among the top 10 in the country.

One of the chancellor's first acts on her arrival this summer was to empower deans in university governance by creating a new Council of the Deans, for which I am the inaugural chair. It's been a productive time to learn more about our priorities around campus. Preliminary meetings have shown that building online education infrastructure across the university has the support of the majority of Pitt's deans. SHRS' online accomplishments are lauded and our approach is promoted as a model for other schools in the university.

The university has formed the search committee for a new provost, and SHRS will be engaged in helping to identify this extremely important "chief operating officer" who will facilitate the continued excellence of Pitt's programs.

Finally, Dean and Professor Marnie Oakley, Pitt's newest dean from the School of Dental Medicine, has already been building bridges across the health science schools. She has been proactive about working collaboratively with SHRS on online programming as well as interprofessional immersion training at Federally Qualified Health Centers. Oakley has a passion for improving dental health, particularly in rural areas, which is synergistic with SHRS' online initiatives.

With new leadership comes fresh ideas as well as endorsement of previous ideas, both of which are providing impetus to boldly move forward. In every issue of FACETS I am inspired by where such leadership at all levels is taking us—from the accomplishments of current students and alumni, to faculty initiating interdisciplinary research collaborations. The Healthy Home Lab is a touchstone of these markers. I hope you enjoy reading about its ground-breaking research that will help people to age in place where they belong, thanks to the leadership excellence that defines SHRS.



Anthony Delitto  
Professor and Dean





# Rory Cooper

## Awarded National Medal of Technology and Innovation at the White House



Photo by Ryan K. Morris



This Oct., Rory Cooper, distinguished professor and Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL) founder and director, was awarded the National Medal of Technology and Innovation by U.S. President Joe Biden during the National Science and Technology Medals Foundation ceremony at the White House. Cooper received the medal, the nation's highest honor for technological achievement, for inventing and developing cutting-edge wheelchair technologies and mobility devices.

"It was a memorable experience and a tremendous honor," Cooper says. "My fellow National Medal Laureates were a pleasure to spend time with and to share in the experience. The president was very generous with his time and kind with his praise. It was wonderful to have the support of family, friends and colleagues."

Just two days later, Cooper was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF) as part of their 50th year celebration. Cooper, who holds 25 U.S. patents, was recognized for his innovations in manual and electronic wheelchair technology.

"It is a privilege to work to improve the lives of people with disabilities, especially veterans, through advancing technology and expanding opportunities. There remains much to do, but there is tremendous potential to unlock," states Cooper.



Read more about Rory Cooper's honorable achievements.

# David C. Beck:

## Moving SHRS into the Future



What started as an interest in helping people improve their health and function morphed into a passion for driving a profession forward. And now David C. Beck, associate professor, Department of Physician Assistant Studies (PAS), and new vice dean of SHRS, is leading the charge to ensure today's students are well prepared to be the health care leaders of tomorrow.

Beck consistently thinks outside the box. As chair of the PAS Department, he expanded academic offerings, embraced online and hybrid delivery models and developed partnerships that support continuing education for alumni.

In his role as vice dean, he is continually thinking about what comes next—for students, for graduates and for the school itself.

In his own words, "It's exciting to be proactive and see the future as an opportunity for the people of SHRS to continue to excel."

Beck's work has not gone unnoticed. He was named the 2023 Physician Assistant of the Year by the Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants. This is the second year in a row that a PAS faculty member has received this prestigious award. Beck was honored not only for his role as an exemplary educator and mentor, but for his advocacy, helping underserved communities and promoting the PA profession within health care networks and organizations.

"Vice Dean Beck is the ultimate 'can-do' team player," states SHRS Dean Anthony Delitto. "Even with just a few months under his belt as vice dean, he is exceeding expectations in developing and reinforcing SHRS' infrastructure, supporting our students, staff and faculty, and pursuing the mission of the school."



Read more about David C. Beck.



Vice Dean David C. Beck, named the 2023 Physician Assistant of the Year by the Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants. The award honors a PA who has demonstrated exemplary service to the profession and the community and has furthered the image of PAs.







# Home sweet healthy home.

**Thoughts of home conjure up countless images.**

They're different for everyone, but most revolve around memories of family, friends, holidays. Perhaps we hear sounds of laughter, music or children playing. Maybe we remember the smell of Grandma's pasta sauce or homemade cookies, fresh from the oven. Whatever our memories of home, all of the adages hold true. Your home is your castle. Home is where the heart is. It's a place of refuge. And, hopefully, safety.

For millions of aging Americans, their family home is not always a safe place.





But the new Healthy Home Laboratory (HHL) at 257 Oakland Avenue, near the heart of the University of Pittsburgh campus, is an innovative, collaborative resource where scientists, engineers, rehabilitation experts and community partners are coming together to maximize the health and safety of a typical home environment and allow more people to age safely and independently at home.

➤ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, only about 10% of U.S. homes are “aging-ready.” What’s more, by 2050, the U.S. population over the age of 65 will almost double to reach 83.7 million, and the number of people over the age of 85 living alone will quadruple.



### Finding the right balance.

According to Pamela Toto, professor, Department of Occupational Therapy (OT), having an actual home to use as a laboratory is essential. “Occupational therapists are trained to find just the right balance between a person’s environment and their goals.”



Toto describes how simple modifications to a bathroom such as a shower hose or shower transfer chair can provide cost-effective solutions to help adults age in place.

“We want to provide solutions that make sense for people—solutions that are accessible, cost effective and bring the greatest joy and wellbeing,” Toto continues.

She says it’s important not to look at the weaknesses of older adults, but to focus on their strengths. “How can we leverage what a person actually can and wants to do in order to stay in their home?” she asks. “Occupational therapists can provide respectful, meaningful interventions that gain a person’s trust and empower them to live safe, independent lives.”

The meaning of “home” is about more than just bricks and mortar. To capture that essence in the HHL, students in the Doctor of Occupational Therapy program were charged with arranging furniture and adding décor that replicates a real home, not a sterile environment.

“We know that a real home sometimes poses challenges for older adults,” explains Toto. “Maybe their favorite chair is low and they have difficulty getting in and out of a seated position. It’s our job as OTs to help people find solutions so they can still sit in their favorite chair and watch TV but do so safely and independently. If area rugs or electrical cords pose tripping hazards, how do we make changes that improve safety?”

➤ Older adults who fall are three times more likely to transition to skilled nursing facilities.

“I don’t know if I’ve ever been more excited about a project than the Healthy Home Lab,” reports SHRS Dean Anthony Delitto. “It is so relevant, so potentially impactful for millions of people. It is the future of our professions, from physical and occupational therapy to rehabilitation engineering.”

Delitto says the HHL is the result of ongoing collaboration, not only between SHRS departments, but also across other University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences Schools, the School of Engineering and the Health Policy Institute.

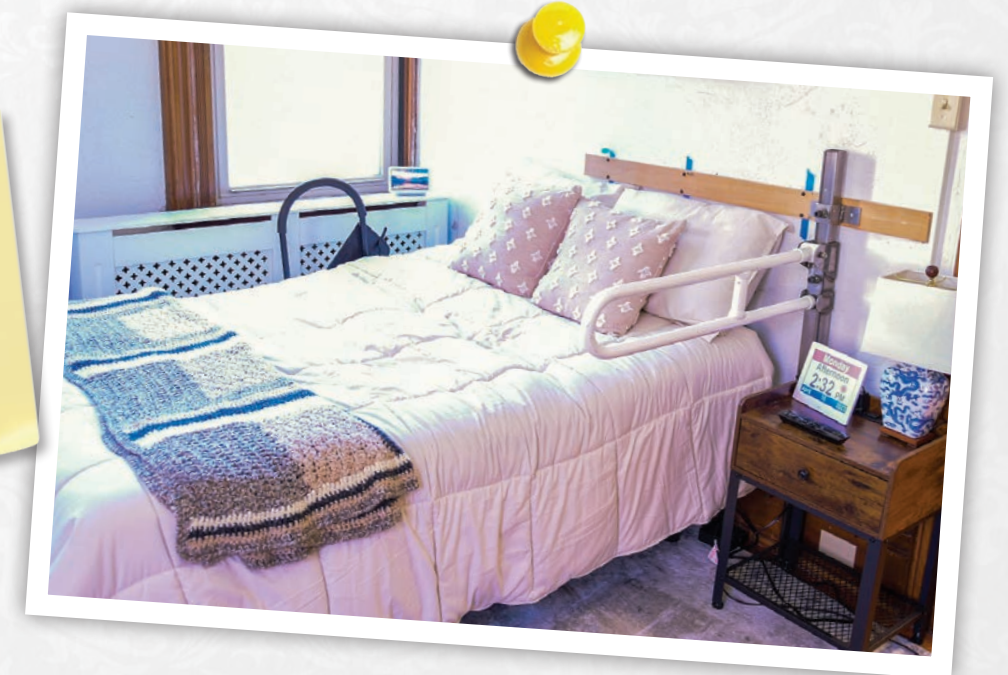
“Over the years, SHRS has been a leader at Pitt in bringing together different health professions to solve challenges,” notes Everette James, director, University of Pittsburgh Health Policy Institute. “The Healthy Home Lab is a place where interdisciplinary teams are

coming together to address gaps in existing systems of care, especially for older adults and persons with disabilities who want to remain at home and thrive in their communities.”

**At the Healthy Home Lab, research is being translated into practice through the design, development and evaluation of new and existing technologies, by advancing healthy home services and interventions, and creating comprehensive health and environmental assessments.**

### Bedside Assistance

Adjustable bars such as this one at the bedside can help older adults be more independent.







**Toto says the HHL provides a great learning environment for OT students. It's also an excellent resource for community partners who are committed to helping adults age in place.**

Toto has been initiating aging in place programs since 2005. In 2019, she was part of a team that partnered with the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to implement CAPABLE (Community Aging in Place—Advancing Better Living for Elders), an evidence-based program that aims to increase independence and safety in daily activities for older adults.

“CAPABLE aligns perfectly with the services and intervention arm of HHL,” explains Toto. “We hope that everything we do will eventually filter out to the whole community. In this case, we’re bringing back what we learn to the lab and identifying ways to enhance effective programs like CAPABLE.”

### Reducing barriers.

In the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST), researchers and engineers are thinking outside the box to develop practical solutions that address gaps in the current market.

“RST operates at the intersection of rehabilitation and technology,” explains Jonathan Pearlman, professor and RST chair.

“Typically, our department focuses on disability and how to empower people to make their world more accessible,” he continues. “At the HHL, we are using our expertise to develop practical solutions for older adults, especially in areas of mobility and safety.”

Among other things, Pearlman and an interprofessional team of scientists, engineers, public health experts and community partners are conducting indoor air quality assessments, assessing various smart-home technologies, and evaluating both low- and high-tech solutions to mobility.

The majority of houses in the city of Pittsburgh were built before 1930.

Stair-climbing solutions are a priority because many older adults must use stairs to reach second-floor bedrooms and bathrooms or basement laundry facilities.

## A NEW HOME FOR STUDENT TRAINING.

Community paramedicine is a growing concept that enables specially trained paramedics to be adaptable to a wide range of situations and provide an array of services from routine care and evaluations to critical interventions—all within a patient’s home or a community setting. In doing so, they expand access to primary and preventative care to underserved populations.

Thanks to the Healthy Home Lab, students in the Emergency Medicine (EM) program now have a real-life home environment in which to hone their community paramedicine skills.



Standardized patient “Mike” with students Krithi Sridhar and Emma Sennott.

According to EM Instructor Christopher Matek, students in the Mobile Integrated Healthcare course come to the HHL to learn and practice motivational interviewing—an extremely important skill for community paramedics.

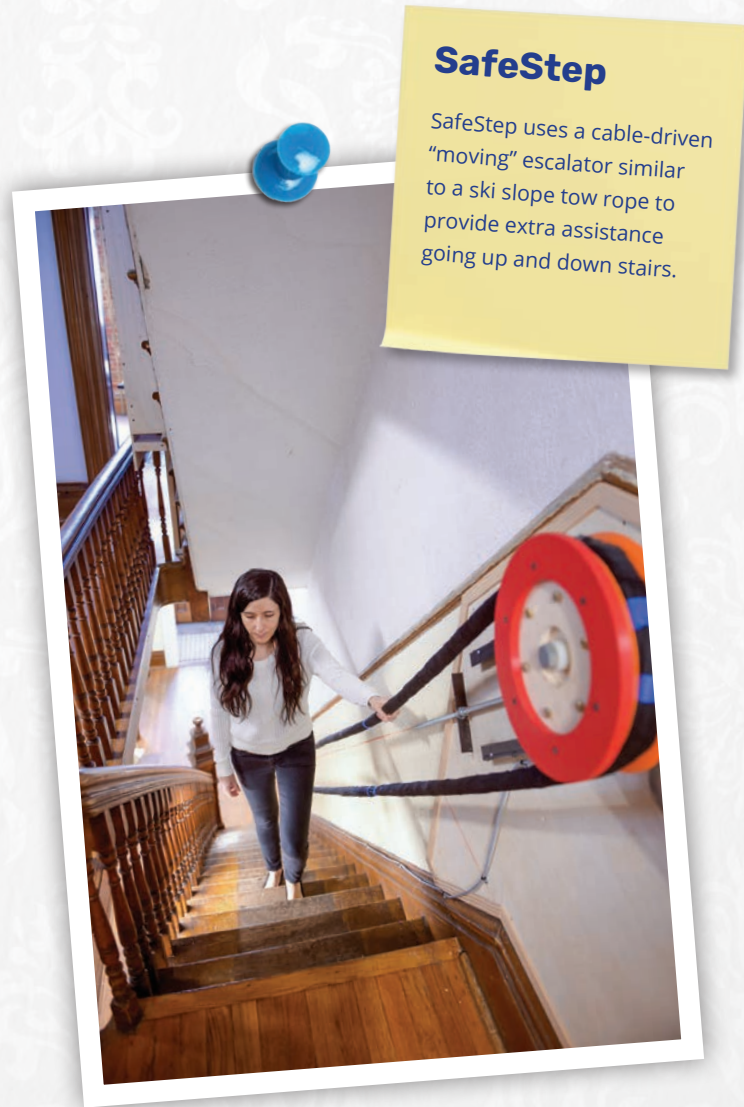
Standardized patients are situated in the home, where different environments are staged to replicate substance use disorder, behavioral health problems and chronic conditions such as congestive heart failure and diabetes. Pairs of students conduct interviews with a patient while the rest of the class observes through monitors situated in the second-floor conference room and later provides feedback on the interview.

“The HHL affords us the opportunity to have our students assess the entire patient experience—what’s going on around them and what safety concerns are at play,” says Matek. “It’s a great learning experience and helps our students learn how to make informed decisions about care plans for patients in these difficult situations.” ■



Do not disturb! Certain areas inside the HHL are monitored for dust and other particulates in the air and on furniture.

**Air Quality**  
Doctoral students Joey Engelmeier and Jemima Ohwobete monitor indoor air quality.



**SafeStep**  
SafeStep uses a cable-driven “moving” escalator similar to a ski slope tow rope to provide extra assistance going up and down stairs.





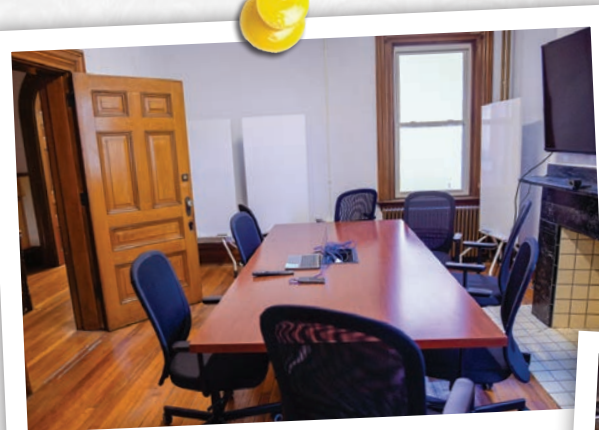
**RailBot**  
Roy demonstrates a prototype of RailBot, a low-tech, movable handle system that aids with stair ascent and descent.

RST Research Engineer Zachary Roy (BS '22) works at the Healthy Home Lab while pursuing his Master of Science in Bioengineering—Medical Product Engineering at Pitt's Swanson School of Engineering. He's the HHL project coordinator and part of the interdisciplinary team of designers, engineers and clinicians who are assessing and developing various types of step-climbing devices.

"Right now, what we've seen is that older adults are primarily faced with two options that are at the opposite end of the movement and mobility spectrum," says Roy. "They can either use a handrail as support as they climb the stairs or sit passively on a seat and let an electronic stairlift do the work."

**"Stair-climbing is great exercise," Roy continues, "so developing solutions to safely preserve and encourage mobility while addressing these gaps in the market are reasons why we are researching this area."**

The HHL team is exploring alternatives that range from a low-tech ergonomic movable handle system that is positioned in front of a person to provide support while going up and down the stairs to a high-powered assistive device that uses cables to offer mechanical support as a person climbs the stairs.



A second-floor bedroom has been converted to a conference room for researchers.



The basement of the HHL serves as a workshop for immediate repairs and alterations to devices that are being tested.

### Creating solutions.

Many products are tested right in the Healthy Home Lab, while prototypes for novel devices are often designed and constructed at the RST laboratories at Bakery Square in Pittsburgh.

**➤ By 2050, 25% of Americans will be over the age of 65.**

Assistant Professor Paulina Villacreces is an industrial designer who is leading the development of Mobius, an adaptable rail system that can be reconfigured to add accessibility components such as grab bars in the home.

Developed with funding from a VA Specially Adapted Housing Assistive Technology grant and the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Mobius utilizes an inner structural rail system that attaches securely to the studs of any wall. Decorative architectural molding with removable sections then snaps over the structural rail.

The removable sections can be taken out for the installation of grab bars or other accessibility components.

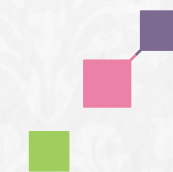
**"Villacreces says Mobius allows grab bars to be placed exactly where they are needed, whether it's along a hallway, in a bathroom or at a person's bedside, not just where wall studs exist."**

"Once the aluminum structural rails are in place, there's no need for costly modifications by professional installers," states Villacreces. "Homeowners or their caregivers can remove pieces of the decorative molding and add more accessibility components on their own."

There is a patent pending for Mobius, and different kits are being designed for various rooms in the house.



**Mobius**  
Villacreces shows how Mobius can be adapted to different locations in the home, providing support and stability for older adults.



Medication reminder technology is under development at the HHL. See page 14 for more about the work of Assistant Professor Yong Choi, left, shown here with Jack Fried, clinical and research engineer.





“As we’re identifying different problems in the house, we’re engaging different departments, different schools and community partners,” says Pearlman. “We’re also seeing small businesses stepping up to support commercialization of some new products, especially in the area of mobility and health monitoring solutions.”

“The momentum is building. It’s amazing that so many innovative solutions are being developed so quickly. It’s a tribute to collaboration,” Delitto adds.

James points out that while a few other universities are doing important work in the area of aging in place, Pitt’s Healthy Home Lab stands out for its ability to translate research into practice.

“After testing our products and services in the Healthy Home Lab, we partner with organizations like the UPMC Health Plan, Allegheny County AAA and businesses in the AARP AgeTech Collaborative to deliver them to people in need,” says James. “The combination of Pitt’s world-class expertise, the HHL and forward-looking partners to implement our research is unique and is helping build Pittsburgh into a hub for commercial translation in the aging space.”



Watch this video to learn more about the story behind the HHL.

## ▶▶▶ PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

These and many other local, regional and national partners support the work of the Healthy Home Lab:

- AARP AgeTech Collaborative
- Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh
- Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging
- Allegheny County Housing Authority
- Henry L. Hillman Foundation
- Pennsylvania Department of Aging
- Richard King Mellon Foundation
- The University of Alabama
- UPMC Health Plan
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- VA Pittsburgh Technology Enhancing Cognition and Health Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (TECH-GRECC)
- Veterans Administration
- Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging
- Women for a Healthy Environment

# Once a family home...

For more than 100 years, the three-story home that stands at 257 Oakland Avenue in Pittsburgh was the heart of the Supertzi family. It was where several generations gathered around the family table to celebrate holidays and special occasions.



Several generations of the Supertzi family often came together in this house to celebrate birthdays, holidays and other special occasions.

Nancy Werder (née Supertzi) was part of the multi-generational family that lived in the home in the mid-1950s. She and her father and two brothers moved into her grandparents’ home after her mother passed away. “It was a wonderful place to grow up,” says Werder. “Anybody that came into the house was welcome! But thinking back, I imagine it was hard for my grandmother to climb those steep stairs so many times every day.”

Today, the family home has taken on a new life that will forever change the way other families live—and age—in their homes.

Originally built in 1860—more than 60 years before the Cathedral of Learning was constructed—the property that is now the Healthy Home Lab needed extensive updates to accommodate the needs of a modern research team.

Pitt’s Office of Facilities Management reports they completed foundational repairs and renovations to the entire home that included resolving structural issues, repairing the main staircase and updating electrical deficiencies which included replacing the old knob-and-tube wiring with a modern electrical system.

Dave DeJong, senior vice chancellor for Business and Operations, credits the Real Estate and Facilities Management teams for bringing this inspiring vision to fruition. “We are excited to support the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences with this immersive, real-world research and academic program space that is improving the lives of others locally, nationally and globally.”

According to Werder’s sister-in-law Francine Supertzi, “The whole idea about the Healthy Home Lab coming up with ideas to help people stay in their homes longer—it’s great. It made selling the house a lot easier on the family.”



Members of the HHL research family gather around the dining room table.





# Aging in place: It's personal.



Yong Choi grew up in South Korea, the son of a physician who frequently treated older patients. The more time the boy spent in his father's medical practice, the more he was touched by the compassion and attentiveness of his father as he tried to help his patients overcome the challenges of old age.

Now an assistant professor in the Department of Health Information Management (HIM) and a co-director of the Smart Home Tech Division of the Healthy Home Laboratory (HHL), Choi finds himself serving as a remote family caregiver, a world away from his aging parents—but at the forefront of helping older adults age in place.

Ever since his days in graduate school, Choi has been committed to developing smart technologies designed for older adults. “Coming to SHRS and having the opportunity to pursue my passion in an environment that supports collaboration and forward-thinking research was a great decision for me,” says Choi.

“I’m especially impressed with the mission of the Healthy Home Lab, where we can conduct real-world research and find practical solutions that help older adults and their caregivers,” he continues.

Choi’s research focuses on examining the unique needs of older adults and incorporating them into technologies that provide health and wellness solutions.

“It’s fundamentally about making technology accessible and easy for older adults,” says Choi.

Choi explores the integration of smart speakers and digital AI assistants with various digital health devices, such as Bluetooth-enabled blood pressure meters, weight scales and glucose meters, consolidating and interpreting data into a comprehensive and intelligent health management system for older adults.

“Picture a scenario where an individual managing both high blood pressure and diabetes can ask, ‘Alexa, how have my blood pressure and blood sugar levels been fluctuating this week?’ and receive a response that not only provides the data but also analyzes trends and offers insights, such as, ‘Your blood sugar has been following a similar pattern as usual but I’ve noticed your blood pressure has been consistently higher compared to the previous week. Should I share these findings with your health care provider?’” Choi illustrates.

Choi sees a future where technology does more than just answer our health questions but also anticipates your needs, being one step ahead to help you make the best health decisions.

Choi, standing, discusses smart home technology with student researcher, Sukritta Suksawang.





Bedside monitors can remind older adult to take medications.



Medication reminders can be set, and caregivers can be notified through the Care360 portal.

He offers a simple example: Instead of the technology just sharing blood sugar levels when asked, it might say, “I’ve noticed your blood sugar goes up a bit in the evenings. Want some tips on dinner choices that might help keep it stable?”

“If an older adult needs reminders to take their medication, we can set up digital display messages at their bedside when they wake up in the morning or when they come down to the kitchen for breakfast,” continues Choi.

This kind of friendly, smart and context-aware technology could change the way older adults manage their health, turning a journey that can sometimes feel confusing and lonely into one in which they always have a supportive companion to help guide the way.

Graduate bioengineering student Sukritta Suksawang works alongside Choi at the HHL as a research assistant, helping to implement one of Choi’s projects: Care360: Remote Monitoring Portal for Enhanced Elderly Care.

Suksawang says the portal utilizes a range of smart technologies and currently includes five monitoring tasks: medication management, indoor temperature monitoring, bathroom usage, bedroom activity and wandering behavior—with more to come.

“Care360 will help to deliver peace of mind for both older adults and their caregivers,” explains Suksawang.

User and caregiver training is built into the Care360 technology offering.

“We are fortunate to partner with the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Social and Urban Research and its Regional Research Registry,” explains Choi. “This gives us access to nearly 1,000 older adults and their caregivers—individuals who are willing to participate in focus groups and provide insight and feedback around how our technology is designed and used.”

Professor and HIM Chair Bambang Parmanto says Choi’s expertise is an ideal fit for the work being done at the HHL.

“Dr. Choi has strong backgrounds in informatics and health with a focus on aging and design thinking,” explains Parmanto. “His unique background makes him a perfect fit for initiatives that are being developed to support people who want to age gracefully in their homes.”



# noteworthy

## HIGHEST HONORS

Dean Anthony Delitto earned a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University at Buffalo (UB), where he graduated with a bachelor’s in physical therapy in 1979. The UB Alumni Association award recognizes outstanding alumni who demonstrate success in their careers, support the university and give back to their communities. “My education from the University at Buffalo opened doors for me at a critical time in my life and gave me a solid grounding for a wonderful career, first as a physical therapist, then as an academician,” states Delitto.

Delitto has authored or co-authored more than 140 peer-reviewed research papers and conducted one of the first large Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) trials—the \$13-million grant for the Targeted Interventions to Prevent Chronic Low Back Pain in High-Risk Patients (TARGET) study.

He has earned the Steven J. Rose Award for Excellence in Research and a Marian Williams Award for Research in Physical Therapy from the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Delitto has also received the Catherine Worthingham Fellowship, the APTA’s highest honor.



SHRS Dean Anthony Delitto holding his Distinguished Alumni Award at the University at Buffalo ceremony.



From left to right, Dian Thompson, VP of Customer Marketing at Oracle; Ahmad Tafti, assistant professor; and Jack Harington, Oracle Red Bull Racing Partnership Manager.

## NATIONAL WINNER

Health Informatics Assistant Professor and Director of the Pitt HexAI Research Laboratory Ahmad Tafti was selected among five national finalists to be awarded the 2023 Oracle Eureka Excellence Award, which recognizes researchers making an exceptional impact in their field by harnessing the power of cloud computing.

Tafti is conducting groundbreaking research in the field of total joint arthroplasty (TJA), with a focus on surgeries like total knee and hip replacements. This project is significant due to the rapid growth of TJA surgeries, and aims to assemble a large retrospective TJA dataset using medical images, scientific literature and health-related social media. The team is also developing advanced artificial intelligence (AI) models in the cloud to address critical challenges in TJA research, such as prognosis, diagnosis and treatment mechanisms.





# Lessons from a Chameleon

The ability to change comes naturally to Counseling alumna Katlyn Kohne (MS '16). Her career has taken her from mental health counseling at UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital, where she worked with children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder, to rehabilitation counseling at the Hiram G. Andrews Center in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, helping teens and young adults with disabilities pursue their goals of employment and independence.

In her current role as program supervisor for Allegheny Health Network (AHN)'s Chill Project, Kohne is part educator, part performer and all counselor as she helps children ages 3-6 learn how to identify and cope with their emotions.

As the host of a new YouTube series, "Cai & Kate," Kohne partners with a larger-than-life chameleon puppet named Cai, who changes skin colors to communicate feelings such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear and nervousness. Once the young audience understands how to recognize emotions in themselves and others, Kohne demonstrates a variety of ways to regulate those big feelings, such as "bubble breathing": taking big breaths and pretending to blow bubbles to calm down their emotions.

**➤ "Use your skills to keep it chill" is the mantra for "Cai & Kate."**

"These words also help parents of young children," says Dr. William Davies (BS '04, MA '05), founder and director of AHN's Chill Project. "Through 'Cai & Kate,' parents can learn the language they need to have conversations with their child about how emotions feel in their bodies and how to find the coping skills to handle these emotions."

Although the concept for the series began several years before Kohne joined the Chill Project team, she and puppeteer Matt Acheson are the primary script writers.

**“It's been a passion of mine to combine my love for performing with my expertise in helping children," notes Kohne. "Bringing those two interests together has been really special for me.”**

According to Associate Professor and Program Director, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Michelle Schein, this project is ideal for Kohne.

"Kate has always had a creativity about her," recalls Schein. "She could take the most straightforward assignments or tasks and turn them into something interesting and often entertaining. That passion and creativity, coupled with her warm personality and her energy and enthusiasm, has helped her take her career to the next level."

In addition to her work with "Cai & Kate," Kohne serves as the clinical supervisor to educators and master's-level clinicians who bring the Chill Project to more than 30 elementary and high school buildings in the Pittsburgh area and as far north as Erie, Pennsylvania.

**“We have therapists on site five days a week,” says Kohne. “That means they get to know students and students get to know and trust them. It makes a world of difference.”**

"Throughout my career I have taken advantage of curveball opportunities that were new and exciting for me," explains Kohne. "Although I never imagined that I would wind up on this path, the general wealth of knowledge I acquired through Pitt's Counseling program and in my previous work experiences has benefited me greatly."

Kohne enjoys growing and evolving into the kind of counselor that her clients need most. "I feel confident that my future career path could be even more versatile and ever changing," she predicts.

"Kate is so good at inviting people into whatever circle she enters," adds Schein. "Now that she is reaching so many more people and inviting them into her world, she is making mental health more accessible—and fun." ■

Kohne and chameleon puppet, Cai, team up to teach children about emotions.



Watch Season 1 of "Cai & Kate" on YouTube.





# Beautiful connections.



It's not unusual for students and mentors to develop a solid rapport. A mutual understanding and respect. Perhaps even a friendship. But occasionally, the connection goes much further.

On May 6, 2023, Rehabilitation Science alumni Christina Hayduchok (BS '18) and Kenneth Pechtl (BS '18) said "I do" in a deeply personal wedding ceremony officiated by their friend and mentor, Amy Evans, senior academic advisor in the SHRS Center for Advising and Student Success.

"I don't usually do that—wed people," laughs Evans. "In fact, I never have before. So, when Ken and Christina insisted that they take me out to brunch several months before the wedding and asked me to officiate, I was flabbergasted!"

Hayduchok likes to say that Evans had a hand in bringing the couple together.

"Yes, I reviewed their applications and admitted them into the Rehabilitation Science undergraduate program," recalls Evans. "But that wasn't me. It was them!"

"And yes, I advised them through the program; but that was lucky for me because I got to know them as individuals and grew to adore and admire them."

Then there was the fact that Evans steered both of them to the same job posting, knowing they would be working on a team with values that matched their own.

**Hayduchok was the first one to bring up the idea of asking Evans to officiate their wedding.**

"We wanted to have someone who knew both of us as individuals and as a couple," recalls Pechtl, who is currently a medical resident at OhioHealth Riverside Methodist Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, and will continue training in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital. "Amy's role and influence in our lives made her our first choice."

"Anyone who's had the opportunity to spend time with Amy knows that she's thoughtful in the way she speaks, and she's patient and intentional with her words and actions," says Hayduchok, who works on the corporate

partnerships team at The Ohio State University while she pursues her MBA.

"She is not someone who likes to be front and center," she continues. "We feel honored that she was willing to be our officiant. We are grateful for all her time and effort."

**"It was the honor of a lifetime for me to officially bring these two together," says Evans.**

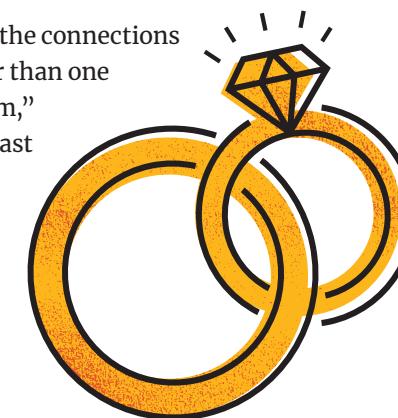
**"It was such a pleasure to watch their budding friendship turn into a lasting relationship."**

"They share the same values—loving and building community, helping others to be their best, being mindful in what they do, being creative and adventurous—and having fun!" she continues. "They both have an abundance of generosity and kindness and oh, such joie de vivre. They are the perfect complement for each other."

Pechtl and Hayduchok are quick to return the compliment. "Amy is a silent super hero," says Hayduchok. "She's always working to improve the program and prioritize what is best for students."

"We both benefited from her and our experience at SHRS," adds Pechtl. "She exposed us to various careers in rehabilitation and was instrumental in helping me find my path to physical medicine and rehabilitation, and in Christina aspiring to build a career at the intersection of business and health care strategy."

"It's just wonderful that the connections made at SHRS go deeper than one semester or one program," adds Evans. "They can last a lifetime." ■



Evans, center, officiates the wedding of Hayduchok and Pechtl.





A spinoff of CORRT, the TiDe program's first annual workshop was held in Aug. at the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. Workshop attendees included the first TiDe cohort of faculty and student trainees, the TiDe Advisory Committee, the TiDe Executive Committee, TiDe staff and Evaluation Team as well as guests and partners.

# CORRT reporting.

The verdict is in on CORRT. And it's no surprise. After more than 16 years, the Comprehensive Opportunities in Rehabilitation Research Training (CORRT) initiative is widely recognized as one of the most successful research career development programs for physical and occupational therapy scientists ever.

What started in 2007 as a vehicle for building research infrastructure has grown into a sustainable program that fuels scientific exploration and builds research leadership.

SHRS Dean Anthony Delitto was chair of the Department of Physical Therapy (PT) when the idea for a collaborative training program surfaced at a National Institutes of Health (NIH) meeting.



In 2007, University of Pittsburgh Site Principal Investigator Delitto joined with Lead Principal Investigator Michael Mueller, center, from Washington University in St. Louis, and University of Delaware Site Principal Investigator Stuart Binder-Macleod to launch CORRT.

"Our colleagues from Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Delaware were very interested in working together to apply for large grants from the NIH and other funding organizations that our individual institutions could then allocate to physical and occupational therapy faculty who wanted to expand their research," explains Delitto. "That was the beginning of CORRT."

The three core institutions invited five other like-minded institutions to partner with them, including Boston University, University of Colorado Denver, Colorado State University, Emory University and the University of Iowa. Together they developed a plan to fund PhD-level faculty scholars who would become the next generation of basic and applied rehabilitation scientists.

"The funding that came through CORRT allowed faculty protected time to get out of the classroom and participate in immersive, mentored scientific career development as well as training and research activities for a period up to five years," says Delitto.

Dyad meeting with faculty trainee, student trainee and executive committee liaison at TiDe Annual Workshop.

**To date, CORRT has funded 38 faculty scholars from 12 universities—individuals who have since contributed greatly to their respective fields.**

Elizabeth R. Skidmore, associate dean for Research, SHRS, and professor, Department of Occupational Therapy (OT), was among the first cohort of CORRT scholars.

"CORRT was a game-changer for so many of us," notes Skidmore. "We worked closely with mentors who nurtured us and provided us with scientific feedback as well as career advice. As a result, we were empowered to conduct meaningful research and emerge as leaders."

Recent scholar OT Assistant Professor Angela Caldwell says CORRT funding allowed her to partner with family members of children with Down syndrome, self-advocates and experts in health promotion to develop and pilot test an intervention known as Promoting Health through Parent Empowerment and the Activation of Routines (Pro-PEAR).

**"The CORRT program provided a natural setting for me to connect with researchers nationwide who have a passion for developing similar interventions to reduce health disparities among persons with disabilities," states Caldwell.**





## Impact of CORRT Scholars

**\$12.7 million**  
NIH invested in CORRT.

**\$92.4 million**  
CORRT scholars have  
since generated in  
research expenses.

**36,201 citations**  
in Web of Science.  
(www.clarivateanalytics.com)

**94%**  
currently work in universities,  
clinical organizations, government  
agencies and industry.

**52%**  
have or held one or more  
institutional leadership roles.

**85%**  
continue to focus primarily on  
research or teaching and research.

She adds that she has been collaborating with another OT researcher and CORRT scholar, Kerri Morgan, assistant professor, Washington University in St. Louis, to disseminate their work and advocate for improved health care for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.

PT Assistant Professor Allyn Bove, now in her third year as a CORRT scholar, credits this opportunity with kickstarting her research career. “Both the formal mentorship that I receive from my mentor team and the informal mentorship I’ve received from interacting with CORRT leadership and alumni have been invaluable,” she explains.

Bove is investigating differences in use of physical therapy services and functional outcomes after knee and hip replacement surgery, based on race, sex, geography and income/insurance. “I’m gaining skills that are helping me develop into an independent researcher so that down the road, I can optimize and implement the best pathways for all patients through studies not funded by CORRT.”

“Skidmore says that CORRT has a tremendous ripple effect. “The mentoring I received as a CORRT scholar informs the way I mentor other faculty researchers today.”



Gregory Hicks (PhD '02), previous CORRT scholar and current CORRT program director at the University of Delaware, interacting with one of our TiDe faculty trainees.

Case in point: Assistant Professor Brooke N. Klatt, a physical therapy researcher who is currently completing a career development award funded by the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Although she is not a CORRT scholar, Klatt is one of many faculty researchers who have benefited greatly from the structure established by CORRT. In order to fund her research related to improving activity and participation in people with vestibular disorders, Klatt sought guidance from a team that includes Skidmore.

“Having access to Dr. Skidmore as a mentor during my grant planning and writing largely contributed to having my NIH K23 career development award funded on the first submission,” says Klatt. “Her grantsmanship insights and recommendations to thoughtfully plan and execute my research and training plan were instrumental in my success.”

The impact of CORRT is widespread. Programs such as the Training in Diversity Education program (TiDe), as described in the Fall/Winter 2022 issue of FACETS, are spinoffs of CORRT. Through TiDe, faculty researchers are paired as mentors with graduate students from backgrounds underrepresented in biomedical scientists, thereby creating pathways that will increase the diversity of clinician scientists in rehabilitation research.



Read more about the  
TiDe program in the  
Fall/ Winter 2022  
issue of FACETS.

Former CORRT scholar Caldwell is one of those mentors. Although the NIH funding of CORRT ended in Dec. 2023, its spirit remains very much alive. “CORRT has given us good momentum for training the scientists we need for the future,” states Skidmore.

“Instead of competing with each other, leaders in our fields now collaborate with each other and mentor the next generation of scientists,” says Delitto. “The spirit of CORRT will persevere.” ■



## ➤ Audiology's CHAMP program expands.

What started as an online course, CHAMP (Championing Hearing using Accessible Medication experts at the community Pharmacy) has grown into a comprehensive over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aid training program, now called Pharmacy-Based OTC Hearing Aids, for pharmacists and student pharmacists across the country.

In Aug. 2023, the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) and the University of Pittsburgh entered into an exclusive license agreement that will provide pharmacists with the knowledge and skills they need to assist patients with OTC hearing aids and to collaborate with a local audiologist when OTC products are not an option.

According to co-creators Elaine Mormer, professor of Audiology, Department of Communication Science and Disorders, and Lucas A. Berenbrok, associate professor of Pharmacy and Therapeutics, Pitt School of Pharmacy, the FDA regulation of OTC hearing aids created the perfect opportunity for pharmacy and audiology to intersect.

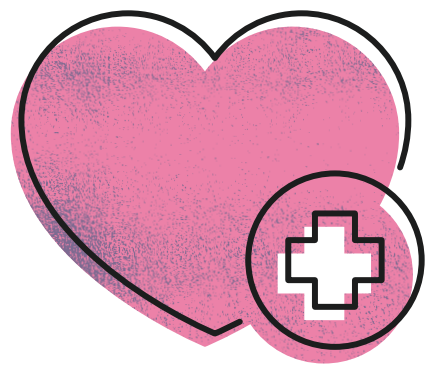
“This training program may serve as a model for how our two professions can work together to improve the hearing health of our nation,” says Mormer. ■

Read more about the  
CHAMP program in  
the Fall/Winter 2022  
issue of FACETS.





# Leading-edge program creates health care leaders of tomorrow.



The Doctor of Physician Assistant Studies (DPAS) program is only 1 year old, but it is already making its mark. This fully online program designed for working professionals helps students develop the skills they need to be at the leading edge of their profession.



DPAS alumni from the class of 2023 come together in Pittsburgh.



DPAS students in clinical and academic settings.

“Our DPAS program is unique,” notes Dipu Patel, vice chair for Innovation and professor, Department of Physician Assistant Studies (PAS). “It is one of the only programs in the country that is focused entirely on quality improvement science. It empowers working PAs to assess and analyze their own practices and effect meaningful change in the workplace while they are completing their doctoral degree.”

**Pitt’s highly personalized DPAS program allows students to balance their personal life with their professional goals.**

Students may choose one of three pathways. The academic elective prepares PAs for the task of educating future PAs. The administrative elective provides a path for PAs who have goals of serving in leadership roles in hospitals, practices or health care organizations. The digital health elective prepares PAs to be part of decision-making committees that determine what and how to deploy the latest digital technology in health care environments.

“The digital health elective is new and very exciting,” says Director of the DPAS program and Associate Professor Mary Allias. “We are one of the first in the country to develop a curriculum based on digital health.”

Allias explains that students not only learn about how to manage and incorporate digital tools that are already in use, such as Electronic Health Records, telemedicine and wearable devices, but also how to prepare for what is coming next—how new forms of artificial intelligence will be used to improve patient care, for example.

“This is a very forward-thinking program,” agrees Patel. “It’s teaching our students to be forward thinking, as well.”

“One of the most valuable things about our focus on quality improvement science is that it can cross-pollinate across any health care organization, any institution or industry,” Patel continues.

**“Our program reaches students all across the country,” adds Allias. “That allows us to bring best practices to more individuals, giving our graduates the credentials and the experience to impact patient care in even more ways.”**

DPAS student Gianna Coscia works full time as a neurological clinical research PA at the University at Buffalo Neurosurgery with a unique clinical role as a rounding PA on the floor. She values how the DPAS program is setting her up for expanded leadership opportunities.

“I’m becoming part of a larger and more important focus of improving and preventing the deficits of neurological disability while still using my clinical skills to care for patients,” notes Coscia. “My status and scope as a PA are advancing as I take on additional and more diverse studies. The DPAS program enables me to explore medicine along a nontraditional path, which is exciting and just the right fit for me.” ■





# Giving man's best friend a new leash on life.

Prosthetists by their nature—and profession—are dedicated to helping people overcome physical challenges. But now students in the Prosthetics & Orthotics (P&O) program are learning how their industry is expanding to help man's best friend put their best paw forward.

With the help of its clinical partner, My Pet's Brace™, and eight canine volunteers—many the pets of students and faculty—P&O faculty conducted a full-day workshop where they explained how braces can increase an injured animal's mobility and improve their overall comfort.

**“Many pets lose mobility due to arthritis, ACL/CCL injuries and other medical conditions,” says Helen Cochrane, assistant professor and P&O program director. “Orthotics can sometimes reduce the need for costly surgery, provide pain relief and extra support for limbs.”**

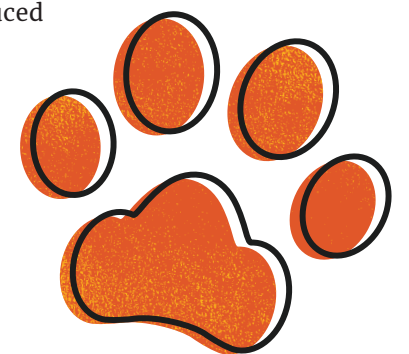
According to P&O Instructor Andrew Biaesch, the workshop started with a lecture from My Pet's Brace practitioners. They demonstrated techniques for measuring and capturing the shape of a canine's leg using furry patient models. Students were then paired up to practice what they had learned.

Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics (MSPO) student Abbey Christian attended the workshop with her two-year-old Aussiedoodle, Reece. She developed an interest in pet orthotics and prosthetics when working as a summer intern at Bionic Pets in Sterling, Virginia, where they treated a variety of animals, including goats, cows, cats, dogs and even elephants!

“The most amazing part of this field is getting to see the moment it clicks with the animals that their new device is there to help,” explains Christian. “The moment a pet runs for the first time since an injury and the excitement that overtakes their family is priceless.”

“Although the shapes of an animal limb and a human limb are very different, the physics and the general principles don't change,” notes Biaesch. “The workshop helped to reinforce many of the techniques the students learn in the program and introduced some new techniques that translate well to human care.”

Clinicians from My Pet's Brace show how to cast the leg of two-year-old Aussiedoodle, Reece.





Cochrane notes that the field of pet prosthetics has grown in the past several decades. She says that although the vast majority of students will not work directly in this field, the workshop offers a broader view of how the industry is expanding, and how the techniques they are learning can be applied in different environments.

“Pitt’s MSPO program does a great job of offering workshops and information sessions to give students a full understanding of the field and what all it has to offer,” adds Christian. “They focus heavily on understanding the technical components of orthotic and prosthetic design, which allows for a holistic training for the students before they enter the field.”

“Students are typically very excited to learn about new concepts,” says Biaesch. “That makes the transition from classroom to clinic more comfortable.”



Twelve-year-old Cocker Spaniel, Sawyer, proved to be the perfect gentleman, allowing Jim Alaimo of My Pet’s Brace to get the perfect sample cast.



Smiles all around after making new canine friends and developing new skills to help our furry friends in the future.



# Meet the Pups!



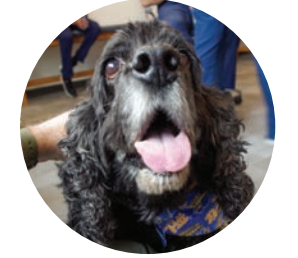
Reece



Camille



Ava-Grace



Sawyer



Jess



Sam



Pipa



Clara



## KUDOS TO P&O ALUMNUS

Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics alumnus Yasir Aljohani (MS '23) received the Otto and Lucille Becker Award for best student or resident abstract in orthotics at the 2023 American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA) National Assembly. He presented his capstone work titled “Reasons for AFO (ankle-foot orthosis) Abandonment by Children in Saudi Arabia.”

American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association President Teri Kuffel; alumnus Yasir Aljohani (MS '23); Associate Professor Goeran Fiedler; Program Director and Assistant Professor Helen Cochrane. Photo courtesy of Caitlin Bowman (MS '24).





# “Everyone has a story to tell.”



Recent SLP graduates Swain, left, and Bardin, right, co-created the “Lived Communication Experiences” podcasts.

The need to communicate is universal. Sometimes it’s easy to get your point across. Other times, it can be frustrating, humorous or even eye-opening.

Maybe you or someone you know has experienced a stroke or other medical condition that changes the way you communicate. Maybe you’re transgender and are seeking congruence between your voice and your gender identity. Perhaps you develop laryngitis before a big presentation or you’re experiencing hearing loss. Maybe you are bilingual, trying to think in one language and speak in another.

“There are no shortages of stories about human communication experiences,” suggests Leah Helou, assistant professor, Department of Communication Science and Disorders (CSD). “This broadly includes experiences relating not only to speech, but also language, hearing and more.”

**“People love to have their own experiences represented,” Helou continues. “That’s why we’re creating a new series within the Pitt CSD Podcast called ‘Lived Communication Experiences.’”**

Think of the podcasts as audio snapshots of how an individual reacts to a particular communications challenge or how they celebrate the communication abilities that they have.

This series was founded by two recent graduates of the Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) master’s program, Juliann Bardin (MA ’23) and Ellen Swain (MA ’23). They structured the series so that current and former students of Pitt CSD programs can contribute by conducting interviews and assisting with production.

The first in the series features Steve, who has lived with bilateral hearing loss since his childhood. As he responds to questions from Bardin and Swain, the listener learns how bulky hearing aids made Steve the victim of bullying at school. They gain insight into how hearing loss affects his enjoyment of music and how it impacts relationships, both personal and professional.

Helou says episodes like the one about Steve serve several purposes. “Many people in the community don’t really know what speech-language pathologists and audiologists do,” notes Helou. “The podcast introduces them in a way that makes them very accessible and points out the importance of their role.”

CSD Professor and Interim Chair Catherine Palmer explains further. “The ‘Lived Communication Experiences’ series supports students, patients, care partners and educators through its bold approach in providing a platform for student interviewers to explore the lived experiences of people who they will see in their clinical practices. This type of insight is invaluable, and we are very grateful to the individuals who are willing to share their stories.”



Helou adds that the Pitt CSD Podcast serves as a natural outreach vehicle. “When people find something that resonates with them, they share it with others. By creating this series of episodes, we’re hoping to build a library of stories that will inspire and educate, as well as support our department’s recruitment and outreach efforts.”

“Lived Communication Experiences” is not the only series within the Pitt CSD Podcast. Doctoral student Brett Welch co-founded the “Research Unpacked” series, now beginning its third season.



Doctoral student Brett Welch says podcasts are a way to bridge the gap between research and clinical practice.

“It takes approximately 17 years for research findings to be implemented at the clinical level,” explains Welch. “In each ‘Research Unpacked’ episode, we invite a researcher to take an article that’s recently been published and break it down, journal-club style, so that clinicians have access to the latest research findings.”

So far, the feedback has been positive.

Welch believes the “Lived Communication Experiences” episode series will be equally welcomed.

**“As clinicians, we don’t always have time to sit down with patients and ask how their communication challenge impacts their lives. The podcast does that in a really conversational and genuine way.”**

According to Palmer, “It takes a thoughtful educator like Dr. Helou to conceptualize this type of innovative approach to education that reaches far beyond the walls of the University of Pittsburgh.” ■



Listen to the podcast. If you’d like to tell your own communication story, email [pittcsdpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:pittcsdpodcast@gmail.com).



# New on the Menu: >>> A bounty of research from Paul Arciero.

When Professor Paul Arciero arrived at SHRS' Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition (SMN) in Aug., he was already a renowned nutrition and applied physiology scientist, keynote speaker and author.

Through his books, "The Protein Pacing Diet" and "The PRISE Life," Arciero has introduced thousands of people to eating and exercising for optimal health and performance.

His academic credentials include more than 70 peer-reviewed journal articles that primarily focus on two distinctive research paths—neuro-cognition and improved health and performance through nutrition and exercise.

**For example, in a recently funded grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Arciero is investigating the neuro-cognitive function of patients with Parkinson's disease who use under-the-table peddling devices while they play games on a tablet.**

One of his ongoing lifestyle research projects follows a patient who has lost more than 100 pounds by utilizing nutrition to remodel the gut microbiome.

Arciero is excited about continuing these studies at Pitt, expanding his work even further.

"As soon as I came to campus, I immediately wanted to immerse myself in the incredible resources of this university," notes Arciero. "There are so many opportunities to collaborate!"

SMN Professor Bradley Nindl, director of the Neuromuscular Research Laboratory (NMRL) and the Warrior Human Performance Research Center, welcomes Arciero by saying, "Paul is an experienced nutrition and metabolism researcher and educator. We are excited to have him leverage his expertise to expand our human

performance optimization line of research with a new focus on nutritional sciences."

One of Arciero's first projects with the NMRL will be a Department of Defense-funded study on the physiology of overtraining.

"Dr. Arciero's outstanding background as an internationally acclaimed nutrition and applied physiology scientist is the piece that has been needed to help build on the capabilities of the Neuromuscular Research Laboratory while also contributing to the evolution of our undergraduate program," says SMN Chair and Associate Professor Kevin Conley.

Arciero's plans to engage undergraduate students in research are already in the works.

He has invited students to take part in the data analysis of a food frequency questionnaire completed by patients with low back pain, as part of a study by Gwendolyn Sowa and Nam Vo, co-directors of the Ferguson Laboratory for Orthopaedic and Spine Research at the University of Pittsburgh. The study is a collaboration between the university's School of Medicine and SHRS.

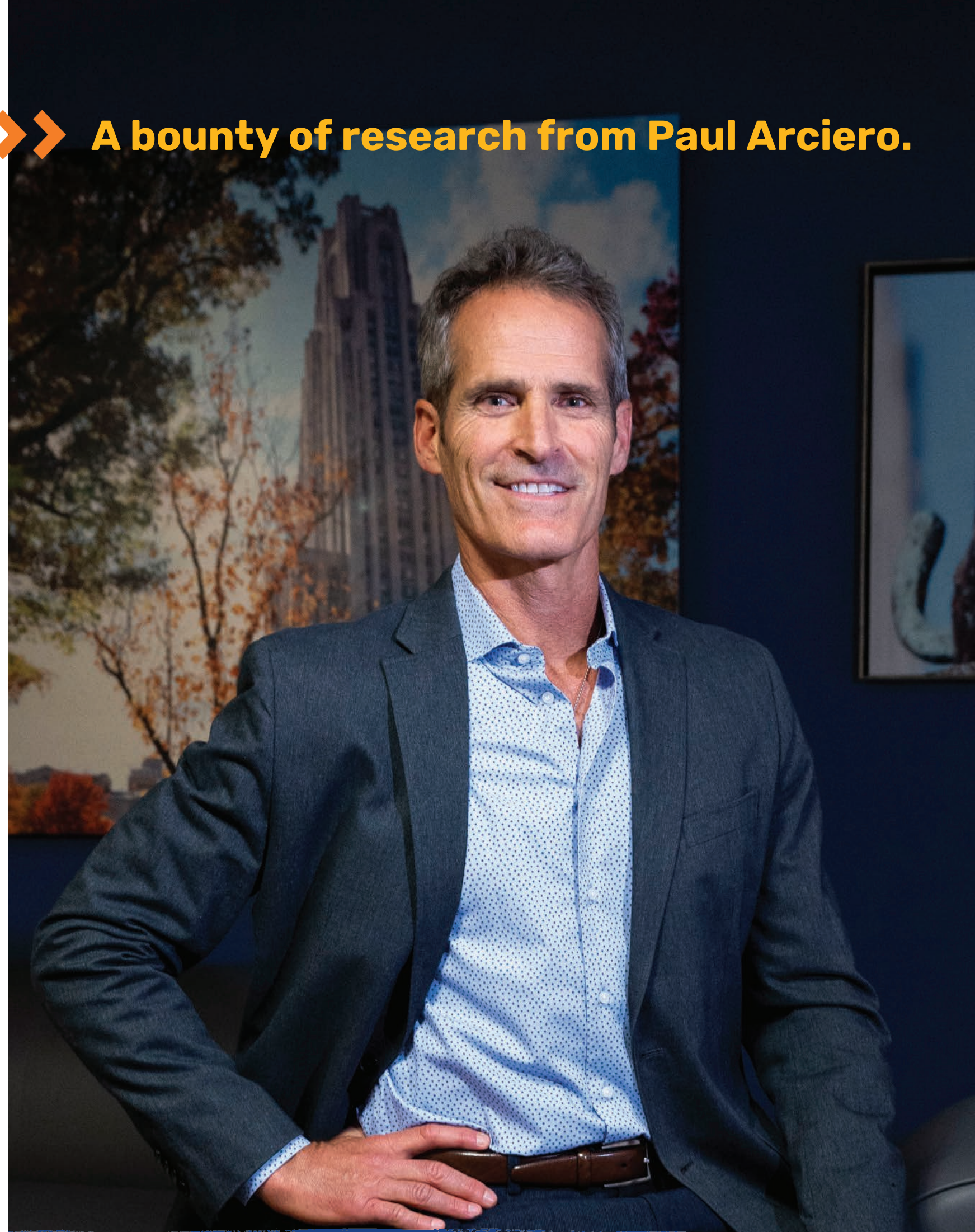
"We know that many of our students will be going on to graduate programs, and research experience makes these students much more attractive applicants to professional programs," Arciero continues.

"Hands-on research provides many benefits for undergraduate students including real-world application of knowledge learned in the classroom, the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and opportunities to enhance oral and written communication skills," agrees Lori Cherok, assistant professor and director, Nutrition Science program.

Conley says Arciero has an impressive background in mentoring undergraduate students in meaningful human performance research.

"He is the right person at the right time to take our Nutrition program to a new place. His work will go a long way to encourage more students to understand the importance of pursuing a degree in Nutrition Science and participating in Nutrition Science research," adds Conley. ■

Paul Arciero, renowned researcher and professor.





# Best wishes to our recent retirees!



## DEB HUTCHESON

Faculty, staff, students and family celebrated the accomplished career of Department of Sports Medicine and Nutrition (SMN) Vice Chair and Dietitian Nutritionist Program Director Deb Hutcheson at her retirement party in early 2023.



over the years can attribute much of their success to her commitment to them. Deb embodied commitment to excellence in the classroom and she remains a model of resilience and strength in how she lives her life.”

After joining the school in 2005, Hutcheson immediately transformed the nutrition and dietetics program to a coordinated master’s degree. She further transformed the program to the current accelerated Dietitian Nutritionist Program in 2019—selected as a “Future Education Model” program nationally.

Hutcheson was always looking for ways to advance the profile of the program and the profession of dietetics overall. She developed the Nutrition Focused Physical Assessment curricula for which she was an often sought-after presenter. She also began the white coat ceremony to mark the beginning of the third-year students’ year-long supervised practice placement.

“Deb has been a leader in her profession and an outstanding educator,” expresses Kevin Conley, chair and associate professor, SMN. “The program at the University of Pittsburgh is better for her having been part of it, and the hundreds of students she has mentored and trained

Hutcheson was named Outstanding Dietetic Educator by both the Pennsylvania Dietetic Association and the Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Preceptors in 2011. She earned the Keystone Leadership Award from the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in 2014. Hutcheson also served as past president of the Pennsylvania Dietetic Association, past president of the Pennsylvania Dietetic Association Foundation, and former delegate to the Academy House of Delegates for the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

“Deb was committed to ensuring all students knew the science of nutrition and was dedicated to her profession as a professor and a leader,” explains Caroline Passerello (BS ’05, MS ’07), community coordinator and instructor, SMN. “Her ability to analyze a problem, research root causes and test innovative solutions—and bring students along for the lessons—both as a clinician and an academician were unparalleled.” ■

## STAY UP TO DATE

Awards, grants, commendations—it’s hard to keep up with the many honors bestowed on members of our SHRS community. Every day, in every department, there is news of how they are breaking down barriers, opening up doors and providing innovative ways to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. For up-to-the minute news on the bold moves of our community members, follow SHRS on social media.



## KELLEY FITZGERALD

Physical Therapy Professor Kelley Fitzgerald recently retired after spending 25 years as a faculty member in the department. Fitzgerald was a professor within the Clinical and Translational Science Institute, founder and inaugural director of the University of Pittsburgh Physical Therapy Clinical and Translational Research Center (PT-CTRC), associate dean of Graduate Studies in SHRS and Catherine Worthingham fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA).

Fitzgerald was a prolific scholar with high-quality work that has been recognized nationally and internationally. He was a leader and innovator in the research community throughout his career. Fitzgerald was one of the first in the physical therapy community to write a clinical practice guideline, which is commonplace now but virtually unknown in 2000.

“To promote and facilitate the conduct of physical therapy clinical research, with the support of the University of Pittsburgh Clinical and Translational Science Institute, Kelley founded the PT-CTRC in 2009 and served as its director until 2020,” states Professor and Chair James J. Irrgang.

The PT-CTRC is now used by many departments to assess physical performance and as a site for conducting exercise trials. With great care and intention, Fitzgerald developed and led this innovative center that promotes physical therapy research.

Assistant Professor Allyn Bove was Fitzgerald’s last PhD student who shared his top priority when participating in research projects—how the project would affect patients.



“Kelley’s background as a clinician, whose goal was to improve people’s lives, was always apparent in everything he did. When designing a research study, he always thought about things from the perspective of how the information learned would help patients,” explains Bove.

Fitzgerald was an outstanding faculty member, clinician, colleague and teacher, but he also showed many faculty that there is life beyond the walls of SHRS.

Assistant Professor Chris Bise knew him as an ice hockey player. He made time to play hockey and do something that he loved.

“Kelley was a great competitor! He got better over time because of a dedication and love for the game that returned later in life. His dedication to PT research was matched only by his fervor for digging the puck out of the corner,” explains Bise. ■

## DEBORAH JOSBENO

After more than 25 years of service to the Department of Physical Therapy, Associate Professor Deborah Josbeno retired in Aug. Her teaching prowess will be missed! To ensure the clinical relevancy of the content that she taught, Josbeno established close relationships with specialists at UPMC to constantly update what was being taught in the classroom to reflect the latest advances in neuromuscular physical therapy.



In recognition of her outstanding teaching efforts, she received the 2015 SHRS Dean’s Distinguished Teaching Award.

In addition to her teaching, Josbeno has participated in meaningful scholarly activities and research. Up until her retirement, she was the

site principal investigator (PI) for the NIH-funded Study in Parkinson’s Disease of Exercise—Phase 3 (SPARX3) trial and previously served as a co-investigator for the SPARX2 study.

One of her most notable marks on Pitt’s PT education program is the development of the Professional Pledge Ceremony that she spearheaded as chair of the Ethics and Professionalism Committee.

“Dr. Josbeno has been instrumental in developing neuromuscular curriculum, mentoring students, and modeling excellence in our Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program,” explains David Wert, vice chair of DPT Education and associate professor. “Deb’s enthusiasm for teaching and learning was infectious to faculty and students alike, making her not only a sought-after faculty mentor but also a ‘favorite’ among students. She leaves behind an indelible mark on our program that will continue to positively impact faculty and students well into the future.” ■





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**Doctor of Physical Therapy, Hybrid**  
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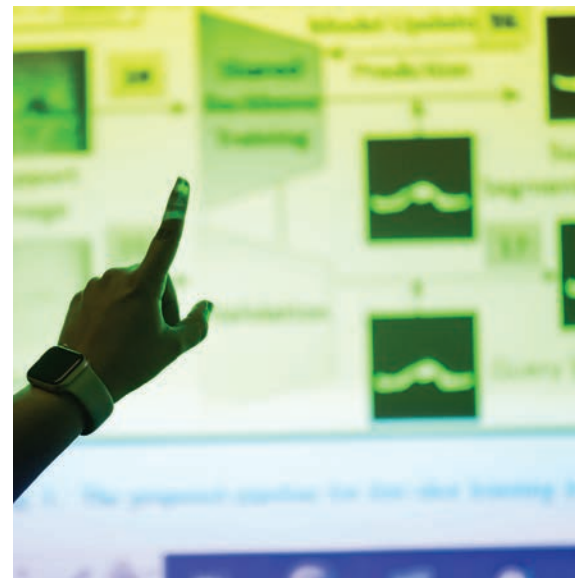
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